



Critique of the Gotha Programme

Today's attached document, also linked below, is Marx's [Critique of the Gotha Programme](#). It is a great classic. Among our sixteen current Communist University courses, it is used in four of them.

In this case, our introduction can largely come from Great Lenin himself, in the fifth chapter of "The State and Revolution". That chapter is dedicated to "The Critique of the Gotha Programme".

Writing of the "withering away of the state", Lenin begins by making a distinction between the "polemical" and the

“positive” parts of this text of Marx’s:

“Marx explains this question most thoroughly in his Critique of the Gotha Programme. The polemical part of this remarkable work, which contains a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely, the analysis of the connection between the development of communism and the withering away of the state.”

Lenin takes the “theory of development” as a given, fixed and firm. He writes:

“The whole theory of Marx is the application of the theory of development - in its most consistent, complete, considered and pithy form - to modern capitalism. Naturally, Marx was faced with the problem of applying this theory both to the forthcoming collapse of capitalism and to the future development of future communism.”

In “The State and Revolution”, Lenin quotes the following directly from “The Critique of the Gotha Programme”:

*"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary **dictatorship of the proletariat**."*

In the same chapter, Lenin notes in his own words, as follows:

“In the Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx goes into detail to disprove Lassalle's idea that under socialism the worker will receive the "undiminished" or "full product of his labor". Marx shows that from the whole of the social labor of society there must be deducted a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, a fund for the replacement of the "wear and tear" of machinery, and so on. Then, from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for administrative expenses, for schools, hospitals, old people's homes, and so on. Instead of Lassalle's hazy, obscure, general phrase ("the full product of his labor to the worker"), Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how socialist society will have to manage its affairs.”

The following, directly taken from Marx's text, is a point for the advocates of nationalisation to ponder. In the Critique of the Gotha Programme, the best that Marx can manage to say for co-ops is:

“That the workers desire to establish the conditions for co-operative production on a social scale, and first of all on a national scale, in their own country, only means that they are working to revolutionize the present conditions of production, and it has nothing in common with the foundation of co-operative societies with state aid. But as far as the present co-operative societies are concerned, they are of value only insofar as they are the independent creations of the workers and not protégés either of the

governments or of the bourgeois.”

Lenin remarks (about the Gotha Programme):

“Vulgar socialism (and from it in turn a section of the democrats) has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution.”

Socialism is not all about “delivery”.

The Critique of the Gotha Programme is a very relevant document for today, and it is short. It is a classic. It is worth studying.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx, 1875.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)